



Best Management Practices: Guide for Special Event Recycling in Rural Areas

Excerpted from the Northeast Recycling Council

MassDEP Municipal Waste Reduction Outreach Toolkit



Agricultural fairs, heritage days, flower and animal shows, and other special events are important occasions for thousands of rural communities across the United States each year. These events showcase unique aspects of the host town or village, and represent one of the few opportunities when residents and businesses can come together to celebrate what makes their community special.

One element of these events that is often taken for granted is the amount and management of solid waste generated in the days leading up to, during, and at the close of the event. Special events in the United States generate hundreds of thousands of tons of waste each year. For event organizers, managing this waste (otherwise known as refuse, garbage, or trash) can represent a significant cost, consume many volunteer or staff hours, and presents problems with unsightly litter and nuisances. Much of this material can be recycled or composted, or avoided altogether. In addition to the specific economic and environmental benefits of reducing the amount of waste going to disposal, special events are an ideal forum for promoting recycling by demonstrating that recycling is possible wherever you are.

Fortunately, there are many ways that event organizers can dramatically reduce the amount of waste that ends up being disposed of as trash. In addition to reducing nuisances, proactive waste reduction and recycling strategies are good for the environment. They lessen the environmental impacts associated with landfill water discharges and incinerator air emissions from disposed trash, and conserve resources that go into making new products by providing recycled material for manufacturing. Further, recycling efforts also send a positive message to event attendees, staff, and volunteers that it is possible to be good environmental stewards when away from home or work.

The *Best Management Practices Guidebook for Special Event-Generated Waste in Rural Communities (Guidebook)* is intended to help event organizers and individuals responsible for event waste management that are already considering developing or expanding source reduction and recycling programs. The *Guidebook* was developed by the Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Solid Waste Management Grant program.

The *Guidebook* is the result of over a year working with event organizers, state and local recycling officials, and other partners in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont to test a variety of recycling strategies at six special events in rural communities.

The complete *Guidebook* can be accessed on NERC's website at:

http://www.nerc.org/adobe/Special_Event_BMPs_FINAL.pdf